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Lucia A Keegan 08/04/2006 10:01:28 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Israeli- Lebanese Crisis -
Europeans Divided Cuba
PARIS - Thursday, August 03, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Israeli- Lebanese Crisis - Europeans Divided
Cuba

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Israel's military escalation in Lebanon is today's lead international story for Le Figaro and La Croix which concludes in a front page editorial: "Israel has always accumulated military successes, but has not really gained in security." In its editorial, Le Figaro analyzes France's "responsibilities" in Lebanon: "While France must assume its commitment to Lebanon's sovereignty, it must also take into account the refusal of other major military powers, such as the U.S., in participating in an international force..." France's position vis-à-vis Syria and Europe's divisions regarding an international force elicit several articles. In Liberation, one

report contends that Spain's FM's trip to Damascus is "a slap in the face" for Chirac." (See Part C)

Le Figaro interviews a Syrian Professor on Europe's (Spain and Germany) overtures towards Syria and France's stance: "Syria mistrusts France and its diplomatic approach in Lebanon, which is too close to the U.S. position, even if they differ about implementing an international force. Damascus believes that France and the U.S. share the same agenda and the same final objectives: to diminish Syria's regional influence."

Le Monde interviews Jean-Marie Guehenno, the head of peacekeeping operations for the UN: "An international force can never impose peace from without. While we do not want to referee between the U.S. and French positions, the fact is that first we need for the fighting to stop..."

For La Croix, "European governments are divided into those loyal to the American approach and those supporting a 'cleaner approach.' Le Parisien cites an anonymous diplomat as saying the five permanent members of the UNSC are warming up to the French three-prong proposal because no state wants to commit its troops to the "adventure." While Le Parisien looks favorably upon the U.S.'s "signs of impatience with its ally, Israel," it sees an end to hostilities as distant. The article ends with quotations that attribute responsibility for the conflict to Israel and President Bush.

Le Figaro carries an op-ed by former President Jimmy Carter entitled: "Palliative Measures Not Enough for the Middle East."

Le Monde's editorial, entitled "War of Images," does not believe that Israel can win the image war, although it will probably win the military one. (See Part C)

The political situation in Cuba is today's second major international story. In Le Monde, correspondent Eric Lessser analyzes Washington's "wait and see" attitude while in Le Figaro one report is devoted to Washington's quandary about pursuing its embargo. (See Part C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Israeli-Lebanese Crisis - Europeans Divided

"France's Responsibility in Lebanon"

Luc de Barochez in right-of-center Le Figaro (07/03): "While France must assume its historic commitment to Lebanon's sovereignty, it must also take into account the refusal of other major military powers, such as the U.S., in participating in an international force... This heavy responsibility demands that France's commitment be devoid all political calculations... FM Douste-Blazy's remarks about Iran, which elicited reactions from France's partners, have fortunately been clarified since... It is clear that Iran, in exchange for its involvement in resolving the crisis, expects concessions about its nuclear program. This of course is unacceptable... But France's conditions must not serve as an excuse to do nothing: we must find a compromise. Because if we wait for a distant and improbable peace between Hezbollah and Israel before sending an international force, the force's reason for being will already have lost much of its meaning."

"Europe's Conditions to an International Force"

Alexandrine Bouilhet in right-of-center Le Figaro (07/03): "Because of France's objections, there will be no European soldier on the ground in Lebanon as long as a ceasefire and a political agreement have not been implemented."

"A European Slap in the Face for Chirac"

Christophe Boltansky in left-of-center Liberation (07/03): "Spain's FM's trip to Damascus to talk about the Lebanese crisis is a slap in the face for Chirac and Paris, which has tried to ostracize Syria as much as possible... Chirac, who appears as though he wants to get back to Syria for the assassination of his friend, Raffic Hariri, finds himself cheated by one of his partners... This latest Middle East crisis initially boosted Chirac's ratings. But it could turn into a trap. While Chirac was pushing for the implementation of resolution 1559..., he appears to be back-tracking. Could it be that

he is afraid to appear to pro-American in the eyes of his compatriots and the Arab public?"

"Israel's Conditions"

Francois Ernenwein in Catholic La Croix (07/03): "Israel has launched a new wide-ranging ground operation... This new Middle East crisis underscores once again the impotence of diplomacy... due to divisions in the West... And so the fighting continues, exacerbating extremist reactions. By not acting, or by inadequate action, the major powers have once again let rancor take over. While historically Israel has always accumulated military successes, it has yet to gain in security."

"There Is No Israeli-Lebanese War"

National Assembly member Rudy Salles in Catholic La Croix (07/03): "Israel and Lebanon share neither a tradition of war, hateful relations, nor territorial conflict. Instead, Lebanon and Israel have one common enemy: terrorism... Israel's response was triggered by Hezbollah's missiles, with Syria and Iran's complicity... There should be less international blame against Israel: Israel should not have to do the 'dirty work' while others dance the dance of hypocrites."

"War of Images"

Left-of-center Le Monde in its unsigned editorial (07/03): "Israel's avowed goal is to disarm Hezbollah. Another goal acknowledged off camera by Israeli officials is to see Hezbollah 'come out of the war as the vanquished.' This last objective, the more modest of the two, has not been reached. What is also clear is that this war of images with the enemy, and the political war that will ensue if the military war remains undecided, will not be won by Israel... Hezbollah is improving its image in Lebanon and in the Arab-Muslim world, if only because it is resisting against the Israeli army... We cannot say whether Israel's military method will be successful. But it is politically disastrous... Still, Israel has little hopes of ever improving its image in the Middle East and in a large majority of the world... After 9/11 ... after America's fiasco in Iraq... the war in Lebanon has revived resentment against Israel, its American ally, and the West in general... The situation indicates the war is apt to continue. The future will tell who is the military winner; although there may be none. What is certain is that Lebanon will forgive Hezbollah for triggering the conflict, but it will not forgive Israel for Qana."

Cuba

"Washington Cautious While Preparing for a Post-Fidel Castro Cuba"

Eric Lesser in left-of-center Le Monde (07/03): "The Bush administration has never hidden its eagerness to see the end of the Castro regime. But it is remaining cautious after the announcement about Fidel Castro's health: a stance which contrasts with Miami's Cuban refugees... American diplomacy has been preparing for the post-Castro era, hoping to implement a new regime after Fidel Castro... Such a regime change would undoubtedly be considered a victory for the Bush administration, which has hardened its position against Cuba by reinforcing the economic sanctions." STAPLETON